3.0 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF ASSESSMENT AREA

Population and Demographics

According to the 2000 census, there are 4,125 people, 1,130 households, and 1,092 families residing in the county. Nearly 52 % (2,158) of these persons reside in Malad City while 48% (1,967) persons reside in the rural communities outside of Malad City (Table 2). The population density of Oneida County is 3.4 persons per square mile. The county's only airport is located outside of Malad City and, with its one mile long runway, serves various needs including helicopter support during the fire season.

Table 2. Populations of major cities in Oneida County, Idaho.

Major Cities – Oneida County, Idaho	2000 Population Census
Malad City	2,158
Rural Population	1,967

Landownership

Oneida County contains approximately 768,438 acres divided among four landowners (Table 3 and Figure 1).

Table 3. Land Status of Oneida County, Idaho.

Owner	Acres	Percent
BLM	267,230	34.8
USFS	138,140	18
Private	348,634	45.4
State	13,658	1.7
Open Water	776	>1
TOTAL	768,438	100.0

Topography and Vegetation

Oneida County has a varied topography including the Elkhorn Mountains (north), the Oxford Range (east), Samaria Mountains (south), Curlew and Juniper Valleys (west) and the Pleasantview Hills (central). Elevation ranges from 4,444 feet in the Malad Valley and along the Malad River to 9,092 feet at the summit of Elkhorn Peak located in the Elkhorn Mountains. Figure 2 shows the overall vegetation types for Oneida County.

An estimated 70,000 acres of the private land have been developed under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). This is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners who receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland. The public lands are primarily used for grazing and are undeveloped.

The Curlew National Grassland (CNG) is located in the Greater Curlew Valley west of Malad City and encompasses approximately 47,000 acres of National Forest System lands. These lands, managed by the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, include private land purchased by the

government in the 1920's to 1940's. Of the 47,000 acres, only 12,000 acres remain in native vegetation. The dominant vegetation on the remaining acreage is a mix of introduced grass species, crested wheatgrass and bulbous bluegrass, with an overstory of big sagebrush subspecies. All of the vegetative communities on the CNG are associated with high elevation desert shrubs. The Caribou-Targhee National Forest Land Resource Management Plan requires suppression of all natural fires occurring on the CNG. In addition the Plan calls for the following: (1) within 10 years of the Record of Decision (ROD), treat 2,500 acres of bulbous bluegrass and reseed with native and non-native grass, forb, and shrub seed mixtures and, (2) within 10 years of the ROD, treat 9,600 acres of sagebrush with herbicides or other appropriate methods to reduce canopy cover to less than 25% and to achieve other resource objectives.

Outside of the CNG and throughout the county some of the more common plant species include: Basin big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* spp. *tridentata*), mountain big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* spp. *vaseyana*), low sagebrush (*Artemisia arbuscula*), black sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata nova*), threetip sagebrush (*Artemisia tripartita*), green rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*), rubber rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauoseosus*), brome (*Bromus* spp.), festuca (*Festuca* spp.), poa (*Poa* spp.), stipa (*Stipa* spp.), wheatgrass (*Agropyron* spp.), Rocky mountain juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*), Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*), rocky mountain maple (*Acer glabrum*), subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*), curlleaf mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus ledifolius*), lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), and numerous forbs. For a complete plant species list contact the Malad City BLM office.

Climate

Climate in Oneida County is generally consistent with other counties located in Southeastern Idaho. In winter the average daily maximum temperatures is 40° Fahrenheit (F) and the average daily minimum is 21° F. In summer the average daily maximum temperature is 86° F and the average minimum temperature is 50° F. In general the summer days are hot and the nights are fairly cool. Precipitation during the summer months is limited to isolated showers and thunderstorms that produce localized precipitation. Months of July through October represent the lowest average total precipitation recorded and coincide with the peak fire season when summer storms likely occur. Winter conditions usually arrive in mid-November. Snowfall is the primary source of precipitation for the county. Snow levels in the county vary between communities due to elevation.

Tables 4, 5 and 6 summarize long-term climatic data for Arbon, Malad City and Malta, ID. Data from these weather stations provide a good cross-section of Oneida County's weather patterns.

Table 4. Monthly Climate Summary for Arbon, Idaho for years 1962 to 2002.

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	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Average Max. Temperature (F)	30.3	35.8	45.4	56.6	67.2	76.5	86.4	85.4	75.1	61.8	43.8	32.2	58.0
Average Min. Temperature (F)	14.1	17.5	24.2	30.1	36.7	43.3	49.3	48.3	40.0	31.2	23.5	14.7	31.1
Average Total Precipitation (in.)	1.63	1.42	1.48	1.44	1.73	1.39	0.93	0.89	0.93	1.07	1.50	1.64	16.04
Average Total Snow Fall (in.)	13.5	10.0	5.1	1.7	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.7	6.5	12.9	50.7
Average Snow Depth (in.)	9	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1

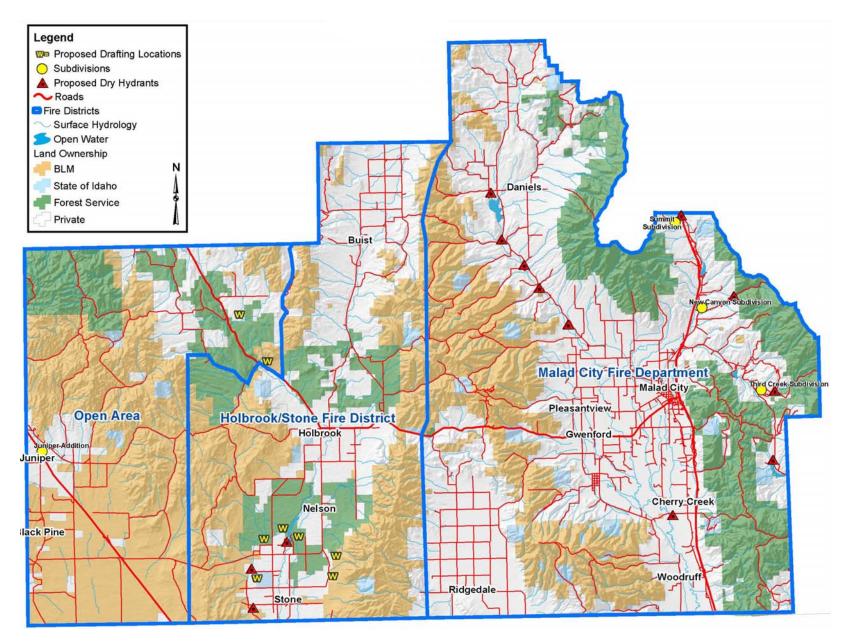


Figure 1. Oneida County landownership, subdivisions, and proposed drafting and dry hydrant locations.

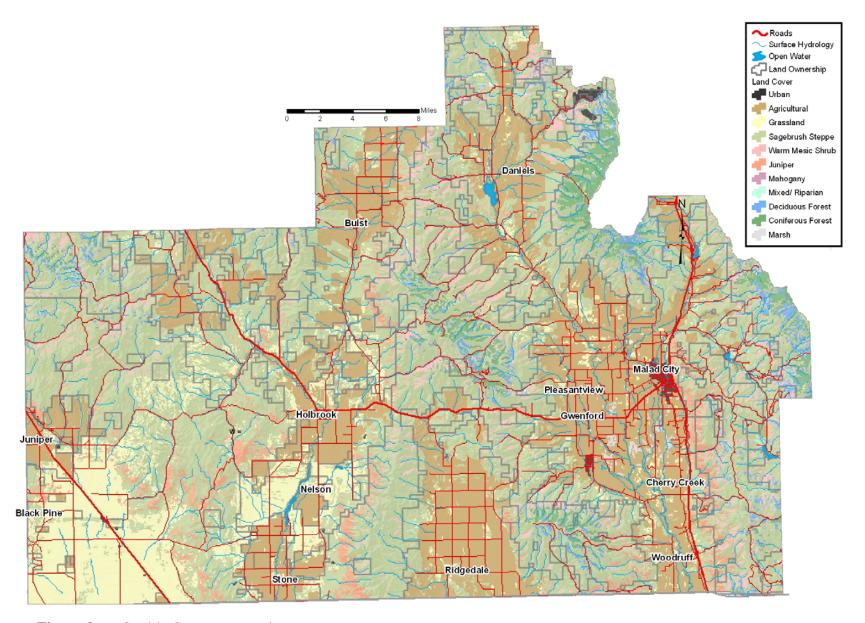


Figure 2. Oneida County vegetation map.

Table 5. Monthly Climate Summary for Malad City, Idaho for years 1948 to 2004.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Average Max. Temperature (F)	32.5	38.6	48.9	59.7	69.9	79.8	89.6	88.4	78.2	64.7	46.5	34.7	61.0
Average Min. Temperature (F)	10.9	15.0	23.3	30.1	37.6	43.7	49.3	48.2	39.3	29.7	21.9	13.6	30.2
Average Total Precipitation (in.)	1.16	1.03	1.02	1.15	1.79	1.21	0.91	0.85	0.93	1.01	1.02	1.07	13.14
Average Total Snow Fall (in.)	11.2	7.2	4.1	1.5	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	4.0	9.5	38.1
Average Snow Depth (in.)	6	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1.0

Table 6. Monthly Climate Summary for Malta, Idaho for 1963 to 2002.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Average Max. Temperature (F)	37.0	42.8	51.7	61.0	69.6	79.1	88.9	87.9	77.6	65.1	48.1	37.7	62.2
Average Min. Temperature (F)	16.8	20.7	26.2	31.5	37.9	43.7	49.8	48.1	40.0	31.5	24.1	16.5	32.2
Average Total Precipitation (in.)	0.72	0.58	0.86	1.09	1.64	1.23	0.93	0.89	0.84	0.72	0.76	0.74	11.01
Average Total Snow Fall (in.)	4.1	1.7	1.6	0.7	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	1.5	3.1	13.1
Average Snow Depth (in.)	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1